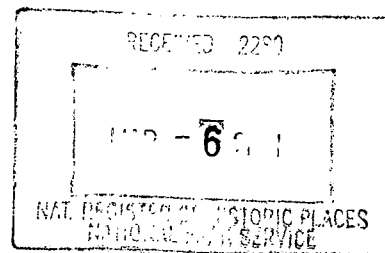


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



349

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Masonic Temple

other names/site number (UN0003)

2. Location

street & number 106-108 North Washington

☐ not for publication

city or town El Dorado

☐ vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Union code 139 zip code 71731

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Cathie M. Mather
Signature of certifying official/Title

2/22/01
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:
- ☒ entered in the National Register.
 - ☐ See continuation sheet
 - ☐ determined eligible for the National Register.
 - ☐ See continuation sheet
 - ☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - ☐ removed from the National Register.
 - ☐ other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

4/12/01
Date of Action

Masonic Temple
Name of Property

Union County, Arkansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

0

Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/ meeting hall

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/ meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Art Deco

Egyptian Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls Limestone

BRICK

METAL

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

SUMMARY

Located on the western side of El Dorado's courthouse square, the Masonic Temple is designed in an Art Deco influenced version of the Egyptian Revival. The 1923-1924, four-story building with a partial basement is of stone, brick and steel construction. The smooth limestone front façade beautifully retains the distinctive Egyptian Revival/Art Deco elements that distinguish the building from the surrounding commercial buildings. These exterior ornaments include a cavetto (or Egyptian gorge) cornice, a post and lintel styled door surround, and crosshatched decorative panels between stories. The most impressive exterior detail is a large panel containing the Masonic compass and carpenter's square is centered between a pair of wings. Exterior changes are limited to a coating of corrugated metal over the building's north and west elevations. The interior lodge room retains its original impressive Egyptian-derived appearance.

ELABORATION

The Masonic Temple in El Dorado, Arkansas is located at 106-108 N. Washington Street in the center of the west side of the courthouse square. The building is 38 feet wide and 90 feet long and shares a party wall on its southern elevation with the d. 1922 Armstrong Building. Until recently the northern elevation was shared by the circa 1900 Sterling Variety Store Building, but that building was razed and the space is now used for parking. The rear elevation fronts an alleyway. Therefore, the eastern or front façade of the building is the only elevation that ever contained significant architectural details. The symmetrical principle façade is faced with a veneer of smooth ashlar limestone and contains the main entrance flanked by two storefronts. This elevation contains single and paired one-over-one double-hung windows, and restrained Art Deco and Egyptian Revival ornamentation. Rising above the façade is a raised parapet, which hides the flat built-up tar roofing system.

East/Front Elevation

The eastern or front façade is composed symmetrically and features restrained Egyptian Revival/Art Deco ornamentation. The building's first story is devoted to two rental commercial spaces located on either side of the central entryway. The storefronts were remodeled in 1937-38 and again in the 1970s. The centrally located double-door entry leads to the lodge section of the building and is framed by post and lintel molding. The cornerstone is located on the northeast corner of the facade. Overhanging the first story fenestration is a cavetto cornice that also forms the sills for the second story windows and the platform for the second story pilasters. The section above the centered entry is distinguished by small low-relief lotus-motifs that are repeated inside as part of the interior design.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

The upper two stories each contain eight windows—three pairs of windows bordered on each side by single windows. There are four two-story pilasters with banded capitals and two pilasters that rise up to the level of the third story window sills. These shorter middle pilasters are capped by truncated round engaged columns that hold the exterior flood lights. The bases of these pilasters each have a carved sun symbol, but one is partially obscured by a modern Masonic Lodge sign. The inset limestone panels between the second and third stories are decorated with cross-hatching. Above in the third story the panels inset between pilasters are the words, “A. D. / 1922/MASONIC TEMPLE/A. L./ 5922.” Above in the cornice is a large panel centered between a pair of wings containing the Masonic compass and carpenter’s square.

North/Side Elevation

Until recently the northern elevation was shared by the single story c. 1900 Sterling Variety Store Building, but that building was razed and the space is now used for parking. The red brick party wall that was once shared by the two buildings is still evident. The upper section of this elevation is coated with corrugated metal and contains several irregularly spaced multi-paned metal windows.

South/Side Elevation

The south elevation wall is shared with the 1922 Armstrong building.

West/Rear Elevation

The alleyway (west) elevation was simply faced in red brick before coating of corrugated metal was applied and a spiral staircase was added in the late 1970s or early 1980s.

Interior Description: Lodge Room

By far the most elaborate room on the third story is the Egyptian inspired lodge room. Paul Gideon who was a locally accomplished interior decorator was responsible for the room’s appearance. The rectangular room is accessed through two large oak doors. Battered post and lintel molding surround each door. The lintels have a brightly painted disk-and-wing design painted on them with the Masonic crest centered in the disk. Above the lintels are cavetto cornices painted with a lotus flower design. A raised platform containing an oak throne flanked by a pair of Egyptian guard statues is located between the aforementioned entries. The painted plaster guards hold metal scepters illuminated by red electric bulbs. Sheltering the platform is a small balcony festooned with lotus flower designs.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Along the walls of the room are three pairs of papyrus-inspired engaged columns. The columns are heavily decorated with bands of painted symbols. In keeping with the room's Egyptian tomb motif, the walls between the engaged columns are tiled to look like blocks of stone. Above the tile, the walls are covered by paintings by Thomas G. Moses of Chicago, who decorated over one hundred Masonic Temples, Shrines, and Consistories in the United States, including the Albert Pike Consistory in Little Rock Arkansas. The ceiling of the lodge room contains decorative ceiling beams that stretch between the pilasters, and original light fixtures with painted Masonic symbols.

Many other furnishings of significance to the Masonic tradition accentuate the meeting room. These fixtures include a centered altar surrounded by three freestanding cast iron electric lamps with Masonic Crest light bulbs. Seating for the lodge members is accomplished by theater styled chairs, and several larger throne-like chairs.

On the opposite end of the room from the entryways, is the impressive stage area. A battered post and lintel molding similar to those found around the entryways surround the stage. Centered on the lintel is a large pair of wings containing a capital letter "G." The stage is equipped with nine scenic drops and a curtain. Two painted plaster sphinxes flank the stage.

Interior Description: Other Rooms

Besides the lodge room, most other rooms of the third floor have always been reserved for administrative use, and thus are less elaborately ornamented. The major changes to the stairway and hallway areas are the sheathing of the walls in false wood panels and dropped acoustical tile ceilings. In the foyer a marble plaque states: "EL DORADO LODGE No 13. F. & A. M." Below that is a list of the trustees and then the name of the architect and contractors: "CHAS. S. WATTS, ARCHITECT/ -CONTRACTORS-/BLYTHE & DUERSON, GENERAL/L. H. KOON, PLUMBING/H. S. CRABB, ELECTRICAL."

The second floor was at one time rented to a business, but is now used as the dining hall for the Masonic Lodge. Similar to the administrative areas of the building, it has received a coating of false wood panels and a dropped acoustical tile ceiling.

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** moved from its original location.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1923-1924

Significant Dates

1924

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

N/A

Architect/Builder

Watts, Charles—Architect

Blythe and Duerson—Builder

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

SUMMARY

The Masonic Temple in El Dorado, Arkansas, was designed by architect Charles Watts in 1923 and completed in 1924. (Charles S. Watts was active in Little Rock, Arkansas, during 1918-1925. He was affiliated for a short time with a partnership called Wittenberg, Delony & Watts. The other partners in this firm were, evidently, George H. Wittenberg (active 1920-1940) and Lawson L. Delony (active 1923-1955). Wittenberg & Delony were in partnership at least through 1932.) The Masonic Temple survives as one of Arkansas' few known examples of the Art Deco influenced Egyptian Revival style of architecture. Its architectural influences are especially evident in the decoration of the inside of the building. The Masonic Temple is thus eligible under Criterion C, with local significance as the finest example of this style in the city of El Dorado.

ELABORATION

According to local tradition, Matthew F. Rainey whose wagon broke down at this point founded El Dorado about 1830. Unable to travel any further, Rainey was forced to sell his goods on the spot. It is said that Rainey was so impressed by the local farmers' eagerness to buy that he soon returned to El Dorado with more stock and set up a store. Apparently a Judge Davis was his partner in this venture, because according to local tradition Rainey and Judge Davis named El Dorado and christened it with whiskey, the best selling product of their store. In 1843-1844 El Dorado became the county seat when Union county officials accepted Rainey's donation of 160 acres for the new site. El Dorado remained a small rural trading center until the early 1900s when a timber-cutting boom hit the area. El Dorado's population was 4,202 in 1910 as compared 455 just twenty years earlier. The newfound prosperity was not to last, however, as the choice timberland was soon depleted.

Development of oil fields in adjacent Louisiana had brought about prospecting and the leasing of lands in Union County. The first oil leases were sold in 1914-15 at ten cents per acre, but it was not until 17 May 1920 that the first oil began to flow. El Dorado attained national prominence on 10 January 1921 when the first oil began to gush from the Busey well. Pandemonium swept over the normally quiet southern town. Almost overnight the town exploded from a population of less than 4000 to 15,000 as the army of drillers, mechanic, speculators, contractors, engineers, merchants, and the less than law-abiding invaded El Dorado. In a few weeks the population passed 20,000, and it is estimated that the temporary population hit 50,000 at one point, although at the end of the first year the population had stabilized at 16,000. Housing and feeding the newcomers became a major problem as El Dorado staggered under the onslaught. By the end of October 1921 some 10,000,000 barrels of oil had been produced from 460 wells on 5,000 acres. At the end of the first five years of the oil boom, over 600 million dollars were invested in the development of petroleum production, and the entire economy of El Dorado profited as a result.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

History of El Dorado Lodge Number 13

On 17 November 1846, the El Dorado Lodge Number 13, Free and Accepted Masons was granted a charter from the Grand Lodge of Arkansas. The first meeting was held in the second story of a log building, which served as the first Union County courthouse. The log courthouse was located at 102 E. Elm St., where Larry's Rexall pharmacy now stands. The Masons met in the log building until 1848 when a brick courthouse was built on the downtown square. The log building was vacated and the group moved into a frame building on the north side of the 500 block of East Main. Lodge 13 and the Friendship Chapter Number 3 Royal Arch Masons met on the second floor of the frame building, while the ground level was used for a school.

After meeting there for a year, the Masons bought the building for \$25. The building on Main burned in 1889, and the lot was sold for \$250. However, the Masons were not homeless for long. They bought regalia for another hall and the lodge was moved to the second story of the El Dorado Pharmacy, which was a frame building on the east block of the courthouse square. The next move followed quickly, this time to the northeast corner of the square (incidentally the location of the first meetings). A brick building was erected on the site and the Masons met on the second floor. The Masons met in that location for about ten years, but the size of the organization had grown substantially and they were once again looking for a new hall.

Seeking to find a suitable meeting place not only for Lodge 13, but also for all of the Masonic Bodies, the officials purchased a two-story brick building on Washington Street. the Masons then moved to the Johnsten Opera House, located in the center of the block on the west side of the square. The site was purchased for \$756, from John J. Johnsten who was a Mason. Eight years later, the organization lost its building to fire. The fire wiped out most of the buildings on that side of the block. The fire was a setback for only a short time. The Masons soon cleared the foundation and started over. A four-story building was erected in the same location at 106 1/2 N. Washington. The cornerstone was laid 28 April 1923. One week before the building was formally opened 1 April 1924, the local paper bragged that it was, "undoubtedly the finest Blue Lodge Masonic Temple in the United States."

At present the Masonic organizations meeting in the temple building today include the Lodge 13 (Blue Lodge), El Dorado Chapter Number 114 Royal arch Masons, Zedekeh Council No. 52, Gethsemane Commandary Number 31 and the Order of the Eastern Star.

Influences on Architectural Style

The Masonic rituals and beliefs are definitely one reason for the choice of the Egyptian architectural and decorative vocabulary. However, the recent discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 by Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon certainly had some influence on the selection of the exotic imagery. The discovery of the untouched tomb of the young pharaoh was a major influence on the fashion, architecture, and interior design of the Roaring

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

20s. The combination of the recently popular Art Deco style with the Egyptian in the Masonic Temple is (at least partial) evidence to the newly found wealth and power of El Dorado as an oil boom town and an to the town's interest in popular world events.

Significance

The symmetrical massing, smooth finished stone, and organization of virtually all of the decorative detail into bands and distinct panels, is typical of the Art Deco style as practiced on a national scale. The exotic motifs of Ancient Egypt successfully lent themselves to the geometric and stylized details of the Art Deco style. As a combination of both influences, the Masonic Temple stands as the finest example of this style in the city of El Dorado. However, the most exceptional details of the building are the wealth of Egyptian and Biblical inspired detailing and ornament contained in the lodge meeting room. For these reasons the Masonic Temple is eligible under Criterion C with local significance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Bibliography

Photograph. "Lodge Room New Temple," 1924.

Grand Commandery Number Masonic Bulletin, "Our New Home." (photograph) 1924.

El Dorado News Times, 1 April 1924.

El Dorado News Times, 23 May 1993.

Higgins, Raymond B. Interviewed by Amy Bennett, September 2000.

Masonic Temple
Name of Property

Union County, Arkansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 531340 3674660
 Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____ _____ _____
 Zone Easting Northing
4 _____

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

That part of lot 5 in block no. 4 according to the original Survey of the City of El Dorado, Arkansas, described as follows:

Commencing at the Northeast corner of Lot no. 5 in said Block and run thence South 38 feet thence West 1000 feet, thence, North 38 feet and thence East 100 to the point of beginning; also that part of Lot 6 in said block no. 4 according to the original survey of the same described as follows:

Commencing at the Northeast corner of Lot no. 6 and run South 38 feet, then West 10 feet, thence North 38 feet and thence East 10 feet to the place of beginning.

Boundary Justification

This boundary contains all the property associated with the Masonic Temple in El Dorado.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Raymond Higgins (co-written by Amy Bennett)
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date 12/12/00
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9880
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Masonic Temple

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Union

DATE RECEIVED: 3/06/01 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/21/01
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/06/01 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/21/01
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 01000349

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 4.12.01 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



Masonic Temple
Union County, AR
Amy Bennett
November 2000
AHPP

View of East Elevation looking west.



Masonic Temple
Union County, AR
Amy Bennett
November 2000
AHPP

Detail of East Elevation looking west



Masonic Temple

Union County, AR

Amy Bennett

November 2000

AHPP

Interior of lodge room looking west.



Masonic Temple
Union County, AR
Amy Bennett
November 2000
AHPP

West (rear) and north (side) elevations
looking southeast

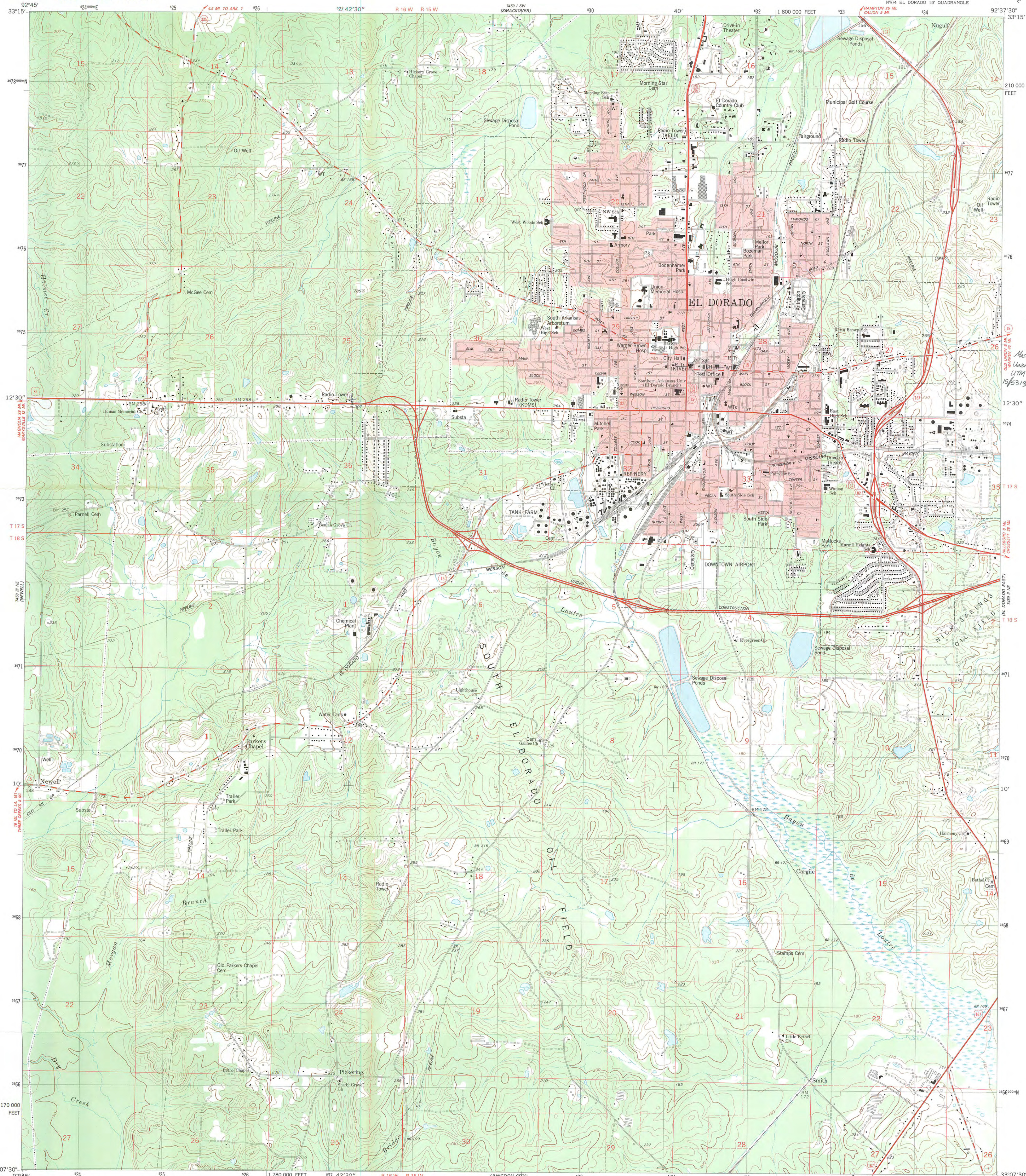


Masonic Temple
Union County, AR
Amy Bennett

November 2000

~~HA~~PP

Interior of lodge room looking
southeast



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1976. Field checked 1978. Map edited 1981

Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Arkansas coordinate
system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)

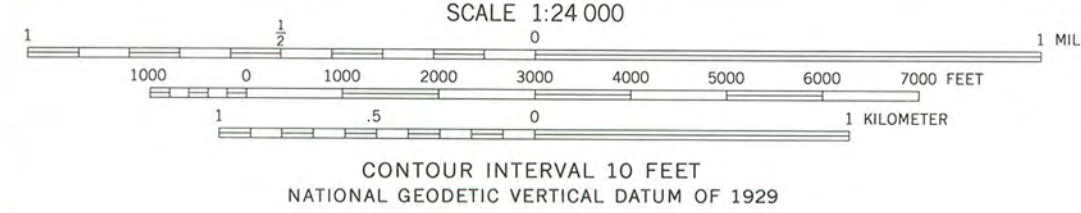
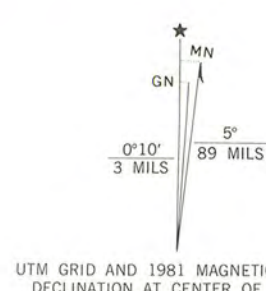
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 15

1927 North American Datum

To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 11 meters south and
15 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
AND ARKANSAS GEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72204
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



EL DORADO WEST, ARK.
NW/4 EL DORADO 15' QUADRANGLE
33092-B6-TF-024

1981

DMA 7450 II NW-SERIES V884



The Department of Arkansas Heritage

**WE LOVE TO TELL
THE STORY.**

Mike Huckabee, Governor
Cathie Matthews, Director

Arkansas Arts Council

■

Arkansas Natural Heritage
Commission

■

Arkansas Territorial Restoration

■

Delta Cultural Center

■

Old State House Museum



Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

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website:

www.arkansaspreservation.org

February 21, 2001

Carol D. Shull
Chief of Registration
United State Department of the Interior
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
800 North Capitol Street, Suite 250
Washington, D.C. 20002

RE: Masonic Temple, El Dorado—Union County

Dear Carol:

We are enclosing for your review the nomination of the above-referenced property. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cathie Matthews
State Historic Preservation Officer

CM:ab

Enclosures

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